

WHEN THE WORLD COMES TO CHURCH

The Books of 1 and 2 Corinthians

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Note: The following are the pastor's notes used in preaching this message. This is not a complete, word-for-word transcription of what was preached. These notes serve as a companion to the complete message, which is available by listening to the audio version. Bible quotes are primarily from NASB.

History – worldliness of the church – Schuller – Hybels - Warren – therapeutic church – church growth church – emergent church – today's model – hot music – “relevant” sermons – multi-site with only a “campus pastor” – “feel good” small groups – Kent Hughes in *Are Evangelicals Born Again?* – "Contemporary evangelicalism's assimilation of modernity's self-focus has had a telling effect on its theology because when the emphasis switches from God to self, theology becomes anthropology; man becomes the beginning point of theology rather than God."¹

1 Corinthians was the same kind of church – Corinth was a world class city – but the worldliness crept into church

- Major trade city for Mediterranean area, Asia Minor, Italy, and Northern Africa – prosperous and innovative
- Church founded from Jews kicked out of Rome in 49 A.D. by Claudius (Acts 18:2) – settled here – encountered religious diversity and sexual immorality
- Acts 18 – Paul enters Corinth from Athens



Note landmarks:

- Right – Temple of Apollo
- Acrocorinth
- Left – Peirene Fountain – also synagogue and home of Titius Justus (Acts 18:7) – Jewish believer

¹ Kent Hughes, *Are Evangelicals Born Again? The Character Traits of True Faith* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1995), 13.

Temple of Apollo:



Dominant building in Corinth – god of music, truth and prophecy, healing, the sun and light, plague, poetry – giving of oracles, medicine, establishment of towns, civil constitutions and the one who presides over laws and customs – pretty much everything!

Fountain of Peirene:



Next to the synagogue – fed by underground springs – six archways where water constantly flowed in – beautiful statues and columns – relaxed bathing – and debauchery – Temple of Aphrodite (goddess of love – known for her fertility cult) on the acropolis above the city owned 1000 male and female prostitutes – sex was form of worship – joining themselves with a prostitute was becoming one with Aphrodite – that’s why Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 6:16 – “...one who joins himself to a prostitute is one with her...” – 1 Corinthians 6:18 – “Flee immorality...” – he was no doubt thinking of Aphrodite and the Peirene Fountain

- 30 brothels within walking distance of the synagogue
- 1 Corinthians 5 – church even allowed incest – sex with mother

- Corrupt even by pagan standards – to “corinthianize” –came to represent gross immorality and drunken debauchery – make Las Vegas blush
- In 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 Paul lists some of the specific sins for which the city was noted and which formerly had characterized many believers in the church there – one of those sins, incest, was condemned even by most pagan Gentiles

And yet, “Paul made a firm decision (1:18) not to aspire to the office of official rhetorician, newly arrived to market the gospel as a consumer commodity designed to please the hearers and win their approval. Whether or not such a strategy would have been successful, the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ excluded its being used as a market commodity tailored to the tastes and desires of market consumers. The power of the gospel lay in an entirely different direction, and to treat it as a commodity to be offered in a competitive market by manipulative rhetorical persuasion would be precisely to empty it of its power, i.e., its effectiveness to save and the transform those to whom it was proclaimed as *kerygma*. He would earn his keep as a tentmaker and *proclaim the cross of Christ*.”²

I. CORRUPTED PRACTICES – 1 Corinthians 1:1-3:23

A. Divisive immaturity (1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21) – cliques

First issue Paul confronted – childish cliques – like high school – jocks, geeks, stoners – the call for unity – why? – obvious there had not been unity – 1 Corinthians 1:11, 12 – “*For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’*” – Clue about unity – doctrinal correction:

- Apollos – Acts 18:24-25 – came to Ephesus but he was “...acquainted only with the baptism of John...” – limited to Old Testament understanding of the Messiah – follower of John – Acts 18:26 says Priscilla and Aquila “...took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” – Taught him about Jesus – Acts 18:28 – when he came to Achaia “...he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.”
- Peter received vision in Acts 10 – no more dietary restrictions – from law to grace – saw a Gentile named Cornelius come to Christ – Peter then affirmed this at Jerusalem Council – also to the churches of Galatia – Galatians 2:12 – stopped eating with Gentiles – had a doctrinal relapse – what did Paul do? – unity or truth? – truth wins out – Galatians 2:11 – “*But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.*”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Addresses from 1942-1977 – “I argue that people who do not believe the essentials of the faith, the things that are essential to salvation, cannot be guilty of schism. They are not in the church. If you do not believe a certain irreducible minimum, you cannot be a Christian and you are not in the church. Have we reached a time when one must not say a thing like that? Have evangelicals so changed that we no longer make an assertion like that?”³

John 17:22, 23 – “*The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.*” – Some see this as a call to external unity – don’t divide over doctrinal differences – doesn’t teach that! – There are no doctrinal differences between the Father and the Son – no union outside those doctrines – no union with the Catholic Church, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Orthodox Church, liberal churches – they don’t believe the doctrines of salvation

²Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, “The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2000), 20-21.

³Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “Evangelical Unity: An Appeal,” in *Knowing the Times: Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions 1942-77* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 249.

J.C. Ryle, *Warnings to the Churches*, 1967 – “Divisions and separations are most objectionable in religion. They weaken the cause of true Christianity . . . But before we blame people for them, we must be careful that we lay the blame *where it is deserved*. False doctrine and heresy are even worse than schism. If people separate themselves from teaching which is positively false and unscriptural, they ought to be praised rather than reproved. In such cases separation is a virtue and not a sin . . . The old saying must never be forgotten, “He is the schismatic who causes the schism” . . . Controversy in religion is a hateful thing . . . But there is one thing which is even worse than controversy, and that is false doctrine, allowed, and permitted without protest or molestation.”⁴

The basis for unity is the wisdom of God as seen in the gospel – 1 Corinthians 1:18 – “*For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*” – Focus is not “attracting the unchurched” through hot music, non-threatening messages with no doctrinal division, the promise of intimate relationships

1 Corinthians 1:21 – “*For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.*” – But many today reject “preaching”

Kevin DeYoung – “From all I've read and heard about church-leavers, the main thing they are "escaping" is the sermon. Most people leaving church still see the need for some kind of community. . . Often, these ex-churchgoers meet together for prayer, accountability, and encouragement. They may even sing songs, read Scripture, and share some thoughts on God. But the one thing conspicuous in its absence is the sermon.”⁵ – Maybe that’s why God calls it “*foolishness*”

B. Deficient character (1 Corinthians 5:1-10:33)

1. Immorality – 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Always a problem for the church – 1 Corinthians 5 – the church was so weak that they condoned incest – 1 Corinthians 5:1, 2 – “*It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.*”

What would you do? – can’t kick someone out of the church – Paul did – clear guidelines:

- Gross sin
- Unrepentant believer – not for those outside church
- 1 Corinthians 5:5 – “*I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*” – 1 Corinthians 5:13 – “*...Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.*” – Otherwise he is like leaven – sin will spread through the church if you don’t deal with it

2. Lawsuits – 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

1 Corinthians 6:1 – “*Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?*” – 1 Corinthians 6:4 – “*So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?*” – Profound basis for this – 1

⁴ J. C. Ryle, *Warnings to the Churches* (London: Banner of Truth, 1967), 109-110.

⁵ Kevin DeYoung, *Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 173.

Corinthians 6:2, 3 – someday Christians will judge angels and the world – all the world’s courts will stand under the judgment of God – and it will be administered by Christians!

- Matthew 19:28 – disciples told they will “...sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”
- Revelation 2:26, 27 – “He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron...”
- 1 Corinthians 6:6 – So a brother is not to take a brother to a secular court – 1 Corinthians 6:7 – “...it is already a defeat for you . . . Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?”

3. Lifestyle – 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 – “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” – characteristics of the unsaved – probably in the church at Corinth – those who practice these things, as a way of life, will not “inherit the kingdom of God.” – says it twice! – 2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” – finally, 1 Corinthians 6:11 – “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

Critical issue today – time is coming when Christians will have to take a public stand on sexual issues – BBC staff have been told to use non-binary pronouns when addressing gender-fluid or transgender employees to ensure that the corporation does not develop a “heteronormative culture”.⁶

On the other hand – Jackie Hill Perry, author of *Gay Girl, Good God* – young, black woman born into fatherless home and sexual abuse – became a lesbian who has now been saved. She writes, “When salvation has taken place in the life of someone under the sovereign hand of God, they are set free from the penalty of sin and its power. In a body without the Spirit, sin is an unshakable king under whose dominion no man can flee. The entire body, with its members, affections, and mind all willfully submit themselves to sin’s rule. But when the Spirit of God takes back the body that He created for Himself, He sets it free from the pathetic master that once held it captive and releases it into the marvellous light of its Saviour. It is then able to not only want God, but it is actually able to obey God. And isn’t that what freedom is supposed to be? The ability to not do as I please, but the power to do what is pleasing.”⁷

4. Marriage – 1 Corinthians 7:1-40

Profound principle here – 1 Corinthians 7:1 – “Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.” – “touch” – Jewish euphemism for sexual intercourse (Genesis 20:6 “...I did not let you touch her.” – Ruth 2:9 – “...I have commanded the servants not to touch you...” – Proverbs 6:29 – “...Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.”) it means “to fasten to, then to take hold of, kindle (i.e. to take hold of with fire) – used also for sexual relationships with women – not merely an innocent handshake – it is a touching with something more in mind – every man knows “the law of diminishing returns” – hold hands – SPARK!!! – arm around – etc. etc. etc. – don’t begin the process!!!

1 Corinthians 7:2 – “Because of this . . .” – i.e. – the electric “touching” of a woman – “each man is to have his own wife . . .”

⁶ Matthew Moore, “BBC staff told to use non-binary pronouns,” *The Times of London*, www.thetimes.co.uk, October 13, 2018, accessed on 11/7/2018.

⁷ Jackie Hill Perry, *Gay Girl, Good God: The Story of Who I Was and Who God Has Always Been* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2018),

C. S. Lewis – “The Christian idea of marriage is based on Christ's words that a man and wife are to be regarded as a single organism....[T]he male and the female were made to be combined together in pairs, not simply on a sexual level, but totally combined. The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union. The Christian attitude does not mean that there is anything wrong about sexual pleasure, any more than about the pleasure of eating. It means that you must not isolate that pleasure and try to get it by itself, any more than you ought to try to get the pleasures of taste without swallowing and digesting, by chewing things and spitting them out again.”⁸

Guidelines for marriage and divorce:

- Better to marry than to burn – 1 Corinthians 7:9
- Unbelieving spouse no cause for divorce – 1 Corinthians 7:12-13
- Sanctifying influence of one spouse in a marriage – 1 Corinthians 7:14
- 1 Corinthians 7:15 – If unbelieving spouse abandons the marriage, “...let him leave...” – term referring to divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10, 11) – the believing spouse is “...not under bondage...” to the marriage – they are free to divorce with the implication of free to remarry
- Be content where you are at – 1 Corinthians 7:17-24
- Advice on remaining single – 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

5. Legalism – 1 Corinthians 8:1-10:33

Principles of conscience – 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 – “situational ethics” is a mark of Christian maturity:

- 1 Corinthians 8:1 – Issue was meat offered to idols – inscription found saying “The house of Lucius the Butcher” right across from Temple of Apollo – meat was offered in the Temple in the morning – sold to butcher – re-sold – taken home and eaten – OK?
- 1 Corinthians 8:3 – love is the guiding principle here
- 1 Corinthians 8:4 – There are no such things as idols – but the memory is strong for some – they still associated eating the meat offered to idols with worshipping the idols
- 1 Corinthians 8:7 – “...not all men have this knowledge...” – i.e. – not all men realize that meat is completely neutral – their “...conscience being weak is defiled.”
- 1 Corinthians 8:8 – “...food does not commend us to God...”
- 1 Corinthians 8:9 – Don’t abuse your knowledge and liberty by offending the conscience of this “weaker” brother – usually “professional weaker brothers” pull this on other Christians to control them – i.e. – for me as a pastor to tell you that my conscience won’t allow me to play pool and I imply that if you play pool you are offending my “weaker” conscience is what is seen here
- 1 Corinthians 8:13 – if your liberty offends a brother, then love for him means you will not eat meat offered to idols in front of him

C. Doctrinal confusion (1 Corinthians 11:1-14:40)

1. Authority – 1 Corinthians 11:1-15

Issue – head coverings – submission in marriage – women were mere possessions for Greeks – Galatians 3:28 – no spiritual difference between men and women – but there is an order given from God for how they relate:

- 1 Corinthians 11:3 – Submission fits the pattern of the Godhead

⁸ Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Philipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2003), 155-156.

- 1 Corinthians 11:4 – “Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.” – must refer to local custom – like Yamulkes today – not started until fourth century, but some must have been doing it here – a man’s uncovered head in that culture was a sign of authority over women
- 1 Corinthians 11:5 – “But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.” – The local culture in Corinth was that a woman kept her head covered while ministering or worshiping to show her submission to her husband – this is not a cultural mandate – Paul is simply saying that the cultural signs of distinction between the sexes and the submission of women should not be overturned – just like meat offered to idols, people may choose differently on this
- 1 Corinthians 11:8 – The order of the sexes is clear – woman comes from man, denoting submission
- Key – 1 Corinthians 11:10 – “Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.” – original Greek doesn’t have “a symbol of” – lit. – “Through this (because woman was created for man’s sake in 1 Corinthians 11:9) the woman owes authority to have on the head because of the angels.” – meaning is that because of the divinely created order, a woman is to recognize the authority of a man over her – not that she should wear a symbol of that authority in the form of a hat or scarf
- 1 Corinthians 11:14, 15 – allusion to nature – men get bald, women don’t – their hair grows longer – picture is softness and beauty which covers the woman, not the man

2. Communion – 1 Corinthians 11:16-34

The Lords’ supper had become divisive – 1 Corinthians 11:18

- The early church love feasts (cf. Jude 12) usually closed with observance of the Lord’s Supper. The worldly, carnal church at Corinth had turned those sacred meals into gluttonous, drunken revelries (1 Corinthians 11:17; cf. 2 Peter 2:13). – the richer “first class” diners would recline on couches in the *triclinium* (dining room) of a large villa – there they enjoyed a meal of the finest food and the best wine – the second class “hangers on” were confined to the outer atrium where they were offered the leftovers and cheaper wine⁹

1 Corinthians was written before the gospels – this is the first biblical instruction on communion – 1 Corinthians 11:27 – don’t take communion “...in an unworthy manner...” – as a ritual, callous indifference, lording it over someone else, or with an unrepentant heart – cf. Matthew 5:23-24 – leave your offering at the altar – go and be reconciled – if we don’t do this the church will be filled with hypocrites

- 1 Corinthians 11:28 – serious – caused some to “sleep” – i.e. – die

3. Spiritual gifts – 1 Corinthians 12-14

1 Corinthians 12-14 is all about gifts – greatest controversy today:

- 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 – partial listing of gifts (also seen in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11-12) – the list here includes the “sign” gifts of miracles, tongues, and interpretation
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 – all the gifts working together in the body
- 1 Corinthians 13 – all the gifts need to be operated with love

1 Corinthians 14 – intended to correct the abuse of tongues – two problems – tongues and prophecy

- 1 Corinthians 14:1 – Seek love, but more importantly, seek “...that you may prophesy...” – Wayne Grudem, Sam Storms, Matt Chandler and others say prophecy is some kind of spontaneous thoughts, not on

⁹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, “The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2000), 7-8.

a par with Scripture given as admonitions or directions for the church – use words like “strong inner impression” “a picture in my mind that I think may be for someone here” “I had a sense from the Holy Spirit about what he wants to accomplish tonight.” “I had a dream which involved several of you, and I would like to share it.”¹⁰ – problem – prophecy isn’t feelings – it’s facts:

- 1 Corinthians 14:3 – prophecy brings “...edification and exhortation and consolation...” – i.e. – prophecy speaks biblical truth – 1 Corinthians 14:5 – Paul wishes that “...all spoke in tongues (languages),” but more that “...you would prophesy...” – why? – the church is edified through speaking prophecy – 1 Corinthians 14:37 – prophecy is limited to “...the things that I have written which are the Lord’s commandment.” – anything outside of this (Scripture) is not to be recognized

Related problem – the abuse of tongues – 1 Corinthians 14:2 – One who speaks in a tongue (singular) can’t be understood by anyone – gibberish – it “...does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands” – 1 Corinthians 14:4 – it “...edifies himself...” – 1 Corinthians 14:9 – “...unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.” – 1 Corinthians 14:13 – it should be interpreted (impossible if it is gibberish) – 1 Corinthians 14:14 – accompanied by an “unfruitful” mind – 1 Corinthians 14:19 – five words with my mind is better than 10,000 words in a tongue – lastly – prophecy is preferred over tongues – 1 Corinthians 14:1 – “...desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”

Usage of tongues (languages):

- 1 Corinthians 14:27 – One at a time – three at the most
- 1 Corinthians 14:28 – Must be interpreted – rules out gibberish
- 1 Corinthians 14:40 – all things must be done decently and in order

D. Definitive correction – (1 Corinthians 15-16)

1 Corinthians 15 ends the book with a reminder of the gospel – 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 – “Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.” – the gospel changes everything – Martyn Lloyd-Jones came to Westminster Chapel in London – began preaching the gospel – first person saved was chairman of the board – second one saved was his wife!

The resurrection validates the gospel – changes our focus from trite temporary issues to eternal perspective – 1 Corinthians 15:20 – Jesus is the “firstfruits” that guarantees our eternal destiny – 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 – our resurrected bodies will be raised imperishable, in glory, in power, as a spiritual body

1 Corinthians 16 – Random instructions for the church – 1 Corinthians 16:13, 14 – “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”

II. CORRECTIVE ORTHODOXY – 2 Corinthians

Basic issue – Paul’s authority was being attacked – 2 Corinthians 10:10 – “...His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.” – this will always happen in any church – must protect Kent – some will always attack – We have been handed a baton – blood, sweat, and tears on it – run fast and long as we can

¹⁰ Sam Storms, *Practicing The Power*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 129.

A. Gracious leadership (2 Corinthians 1:1-2:17)

Paul's gracious leadership through personal pain is evident:

- 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 – Personal affliction – Expression of personal affliction that nearly ended his ministry through death – Paul seemed absolutely sure that he was going to be killed for the sake of the gospel
- 2 Corinthians 1:12-14 – Personal integrity – 2 Corinthians 1:12 – Paul conducted himself with “...holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God...”
- 2 Corinthians 1:15-24 – personal plans – Paul's change of plans was used against him by the false apostles who had arrived – they used this to accuse him of being untrustworthy – he had planned to leave Ephesus and stop in Corinth on the way to Macedonia and then return to Corinth – but his plans had changed and they used this to discredit him
- Personal love expressed – 2 Corinthians 2:1-4 – 2 Corinthians 2:4 – “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.”
- 2 Corinthians 2:6, 7 – shows grace to man – disciplines in 1 Corinthians 5 – “Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.”

B. Faithful people (2 Corinthians 3:1-18)

2 Corinthians 3:1 – “Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?” – the false apostles had accused Paul of not having the proper papers to prove his legitimacy! – it's possible they had arrived from Jerusalem with some kind of forged documents from the apostles in Jerusalem authenticating their position – Paul was questioning why they had so easily listened to the false apostles who demeaned their reputation – it was like they needed a reference letter to introduce themselves

Paul's reply – he didn't need silly reference letters 2 Corinthians 3:2, 3 – “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

C. Gospel ministry (2 Corinthians 4:1-9:16)

Basic understanding of what we're up against – The gospel is veiled because 2 Corinthians 4:4 – “...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” – this is why our friends and family cannot perceive the gospel – their eyes are covered with Satanic haze so that they cannot be saved – they only hope for them is that God will remove that haze and give them faith to believe

And what are we? – “chopped liver?” – worse – 2 Corinthians 4:7 – “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves...” – “earthen vessels” – “baked clay” – household pots used to store garbage and waste – this is how Paul viewed himself – cf. 1 Corinthians 4:13 – “scum of the earth” – “dregs of this world” – the treasure in the pot is the issue – not the pot!

Here's what happens to clay pots – 2 Corinthians 4:8-10 – “we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” – but it's OK because of the treasure inside!

We minister with eternity in view:

- 2 Corinthians 5:7-8 – we “...walk by faith, not by sight...” and prefer to be “...absent from the body and present with the Lord.”
- We focus on our future reward – 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10 – the judgment seat of Christ is eternal – “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”
- We receive His righteousness – 2 Corinthians 5:21 – “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” – Salvation is more than forgiveness of sin – we need more – forgiveness gets us even in our bank account, but there is no money in your account – you are rid of your debt but you have no capital – God’s infused righteousness deposits His wealth into your account – we are not just dogmatic about this – we’re dogmatic about it!

Furthermore – gospel ministry is tied to personal devotion to Christ – 2 Corinthians 6:1-9:15

- Give no cause for offense – 2 Corinthians 6:1-14
- Don’t partner with unbelievers – 2 Corinthians 6:15-7:1
- A heart for people – 2 Corinthians 7:2-16
- Generosity – 2 Corinthians 7:8-9 – your money is a sign of where your heart is – this isn’t tithing – tax – Old Testament and New Testament standard is “freewill offering” – generosity

D. Apostolic authenticity (2 Corinthians 10-12)

Caveat – there is no such thing today as biblical apostles – Peter Wagner said he became an apostle when a Glendale policeman who was 6’4” and 260 lbs. and a “designated intercessor” stood over him with a sword in his hand – ridiculous – God appoints apostles – given as foundational pillars of the early church – Ephesians 2:20 – the church was “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone – Ephesians 4:12 provides sequences of gifts for the church – “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,”

1. Apostolic authority – 2 Corinthians 10:1-18

Paul asserts his authority – 2 Corinthians 10:1 – “Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!” – “don’t make me come down there to see you!”

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 – “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (like the one in Corinth housing prostitutes and false teaching!) We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.” – The ideologies of man can only be combated with spiritual weapons

Indication of what Paul was up against – 2 Corinthians 10:12 – “For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.” – Joel Osteen, Bill Johnson, Benny Hinn

2. Apostolic conduct – 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Paul’s reaction to the “super apostles” – 2 Corinthians 11:4-5 – “For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel

which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.”

Paul’s clear denunciation – 2 Corinthians 11:13, 14 – *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”*

3. Apostolic suffering – 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Paul’s logic continues in listing his suffering – would a false apostle really go through all of this? – 2 Corinthians 11:23-25 – *“Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. . .”*

4. Apostolic credentials – 2 Corinthians 12:1-13

Paul never says who this man is, but it is clear it is him – 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 – *“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.”*

False teachers and TV evangelists try to emulate this today – claim they went to heaven, went to hell, saw and talked with Jesus – one “worship leader” said she talked with Jesus – asked Him what He was thinking about when He created her! – Paul was so struck with what happened he wouldn’t even say it was him!

E. Test yourself (2 Corinthians 13)

2 Corinthians 13:5 – *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith: examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test.”* – the test is obvious for Paul in light of false apostles questioning his status – but it applies to us as well – true Christians will pass the test of self-examination

Paul’s final assertion of his reason for writing – 2 Corinthians 13:10 – *“For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.”*

Obedience – John 3:36 – if you do not obey, you do not believe – if you do not believe then the wrath of God abides on you NOW – cf. Romans 6:16 – Matthew 7:21 – this isn’t talking about the perfection of your life, but the direction of your life – those who have an empty confession have a dead faith

Lack of obeying the Lordship of Christ is like having me knock on your door and you ask “Who’s there?” – “Jon McNeff” – “Jon can come in, but McNeff can’t.” – accepting Jesus as Savior without accepting as Lord is impossible!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some signs of a “worldly” church?
2. What is meant by 1 Corinthians 6:9-11?
3. How are tongues and prophecy compared in 1 Corinthians 14:22-25?
4. What does 1 Corinthians 2:14 and 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4 tell us about man and salvation?
5. What is Paul saying in 2 Corinthians 7:6-16?
6. What is your relationship to the local church?